

Section 4

GETTING STARTED

NJ School Counseling Initiative

4.1: BEGINNING THE NEW WHILE WORKING IN THE OLD

Your decision to implement a model counseling program requires three to five years for full transition. Collaboration is needed from the entire school community at each stage of the transition.

This is the beginning of an exciting, dynamic process involving the entire school community. With any major systemwide change, you will encounter questions and resistance until all stakeholders understand and appreciate the value of the change. The hardest work occurs before change is implemented. Becoming aware, understanding, making a change, developing the support, retraining, experimenting, and brainstorming are essential to the change process.

The graphic below represents a step-by-step plan for local districts to move their current program toward the New Jersey Model.

Introduce the Initiative

Organize for Change

Design the Program

Prepare for Transition

Implement the Program

Evaluate the Results

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4.2: A STEP-BY-STEP PLANNING GUIDE

INTRODUCE THE INITIATIVE

- ✓ gather ground support from Superintendent, Board of Education and community
- ✓ establish your "School Counseling Team"
- ✓ learn about the New Jersey Model
- ✓ broaden support and enhance awareness through the New Jersey Model Training Workshop

ORGANIZE FOR CHANGE

- ✓ assess your current program and resources by interviewing staff, students, parents, service providers
- ✓ compare your current program with the New Jersey Model to determine "fit"
- ✓ conduct your needs assessment to identify students and determine need
- ✓ analyze data results of needs assessment
- ✓ consult with New Jersey Model pilot districts that have conducted their needs assessment
- ✓ develop mission statement and rationale

DESIGN THE PROGRAM

- ✓ reallocate your current resources and identify new resources needed
- ✓ prioritize the needs of your students
- ✓ establish student outcomes to address needs
- ✓ review results with staff
- ✓ determine new or reallocation of resources
- ✓ outline your 3-5 year transition plan
- ✓ network with area New Jersey Pilot Districts in New Jersey Model
- ✓ develop a comprehensive written plan
- ✓ design a curriculum model
- ✓ present proposal and timeline to your Board of Education
- ✓ broaden support base in the school and community

PREPARE FOR TRANSITION

- ✓ organize your Advisory Council
- ✓ present written plan to Board of Education for adoption
- ✓ present plan to the staff
- ✓ establish a three year time line to "phase in" the New Jersey district program
- ✓ seek Board assurances
- ✓ allocate new resources and facilities for the next year's goals
- ✓ develop parents' and students' orientation to the program
- ✓ conduct staff training
- ✓ develop Model K-12 unit
- ✓ expand counseling curriculum
- ✓ initiate new counseling delivery system

IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM

- ✓ establish your master calendar
- ✓ initiate your resource and referral directory for counselors/parents/staff
- ✓ initiate professional development program
- ✓ provide in-service training to work in old program while phasing in the new program

EVALUATE THE RESULTS

- ✓ continue your School Counseling Team as a resource and program evaluation group
- ✓ update staff evaluations to reflect enhanced roles
- ✓ initiate student outcome evaluations
- ✓ propose program revisions to meet changing needs
- ✓ adjust professional development program to meet new needs
- ✓ report regularly to the Board of Education
- ✓ participate in ongoing New Jersey Model Training Workshops

NJ School Counseling Initiative

4.3: THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The needs assessment is conducted to find out what your program should be doing to meet the needs of your students. Some needs are clearly expressed or perceived by your district and your community. Other needs are more subtle, requiring your school counseling team to draw conclusions based upon the data you collect.

Traditional guidance programs often run year after year without adjustment to changing student needs. Many guidance programs have never systematically determined if what they do is needed by or acceptable to the district.

Your district needs assessment is the foundation of the comprehensive program, and has many benefits. The purpose of the needs assessment is to:

1. Establish and maintain open communications among home, school, and community
2. Identify what elements of your program are effective and should be strengthened
3. Provide a common guidance and counseling vocabulary understood by all stakeholders
4. Design the blueprint and build the foundation upon which your program can be built
5. Create the outline for your program evaluation and pre-test and post-test of student competencies
6. Identify the general curriculum goals for the student competencies
7. Show areas requiring professional development and training
8. Create a timely, regular, and anticipated structure for dialogue and collaboration among all stakeholders—parents, students, teachers, counselors, administrators
9. Provide evidence for increased resources, funding, and staff
10. Help focus the counselor's role
11. Identify the expectations, issues, and problems of each stakeholder
12. Present statistically the need for a comprehensive school counseling program to parents, teachers, administrators and the Board of Education

**How to Conduct
Your Needs
Assessment**

1. Prepare for the needs assessment carefully. ☒
 - a. Make sure your school counseling team is functioning. ☒
 - b. Appoint a Needs Assessment task force from your team. ☒
 - c. Train your task force for the needs assessment through participation in a training workshop by NJDGCI. ☒
 - d. Orient your stakeholders toward the importance of their participation in the needs assessment through newsletters, parent-teacher meetings, and staff meetings. ☒
 - e. Become familiar with samples of needs assessment instruments. ☒
 - f. Exchange ideas with other district teams that have conducted their needs assessment. ☒
 - g. Be ready to expect both enthusiasm and resistance. ☒
2. Study your current guidance program thoroughly. ☒
 - a. Gather information about your current program; activities, resources, goals, documentation, evaluation, etc. ☒
 - b. Prepare a brief history of your district's guidance program and its evolution toward comprehensive developmental school counseling. ☒
 - c. Develop a general outline of your district's needs, strengths, and problems, recognizing subpopulations and unique aspects of your community. ☒
 - d. Study the results of your time and task analysis to gather data on counselor activities, current priorities, and hidden needs. ☒
 - e. Review recent monitoring and Middle States evaluation reports for trends and needs in school counseling and in student development. ☒
 - f. Provide opportunities to discuss expectations for school counseling students with small groups of counselors, parents, teachers, community and business persons or students in each school. ☒
 - g. Identify the expectations of the community, business, and individuals of school counseling and student development. ☒
 - h. Gather available data about perceptions of the current program, its goals, effectiveness, and response to needs. ☒

NJ School Counseling Initiative

3. Prioritize the needs and expectations of your district. ☒
 - a. Organize, summarize, and synthesize the data. ☒
 - b. Identify expectations and goals being met by the current program. ☒
 - c. Identify expectations and goals not being met by the current program. ☒
 - d. Organize expectations and goals into the three developmental domains: personal-social, educational, and career. ☒
 - e. Share your report with small groups of stakeholders. ☒
 - f. Compare your list with sample goals in the New Jersey Model to identify developmental skills which may not be addressed in the survey. ☒
 - g. Continue informal discussions with stakeholders to refine expectations and needs. ☒
 - h. Select the goals which have received the highest priority of the school and community for further assessment. ☒
4. Create your needs assessment (you may use an existing needs assessment instrument and modify it to the unique needs of your district). ☒
 - a. Limit the number of student competencies to eight to twelve in each developmental area: personal-social, educational, career. ☒
 - b. Write items clearly understood by students at their developmental level, i.e.: ☒

Students:

 - I need to know how to do better in school
 - I need help to learn to express my feelings to others
 - I need help to choose a career
 - I need to learn how to stand up for my ideas
 - c. Use similar wording for each item for parents or teachers to insure the same need is assessed, i.e.: ☒

Parents:

 - My child needs help to learn to express feelings to others.

Teacher/Administrator:

 - Students need help to learn to express feelings to others.
 - d. Be brief to encourage maximum response. ☒

- e. Test the needs assessment instrument on a sample of the stakeholder groups to identify items or directions which need refinement. ☒
- f. Develop procedures and forms to tabulate and interpret the data. Test the procedures on the sample to be ready for collection. ☒
- g. Promote the needs assessment with maximum public relations to encourage response. ☒
- h. In small to medium schools, survey 100% of the students, teachers and parents. In schools with more than 600 students, survey 50% of the population randomly. ☒
- i. Follow up with personal reminders or phone calls to encourage responses and underscore the importance of each response. ☒
- j. Provide several ways to return the assessment, i.e., mail, drop-off boxes, pick-up points. Students can complete the assessment in small groups or classes; teachers at meetings, parents at conferences. ☒
- k. Tabulate the data according to your procedures. ☒
- 5. Develop student competencies to address the assessed needs. ☒
 - a. Determine the needs and priorities of each stakeholder group—students, parents, teachers, administrators, community, business. ☒
 - b. Compare the needs and priorities of the stakeholders to the general expectations identified in Part 3, and determine 'fit'. Chart this comparison graphically, i.e., histogram. ☒
 - c. Write the student competencies that address the prioritized needs in general terms, i.e.: ☒
 - I can describe how I express my feelings to others in appropriate ways.
 - I can show how I can stand up for my rights when it is important.
 - I know how my goals can be met by different careers.
 - I can set realistic goals for myself.
 - I can show how to ask for help when I need it.
 - I know how to prepare for the careers in which I am interested.
 - I know how it feels to be successful in school.
 - d. Circulate the student competencies to a sample of students, teachers, parents, and staff to refine them. ☒

NJ School Counseling Initiative

6. Plan to implement the competencies most effectively. ☒
- a. Identify classes, curricula, components or activities which lend themselves readily to addressing the competency, e.g.: ☒
- Student peer leaders leading freshman groups conduct unit on student assertiveness.
 - A seventh grade classroom unit on The Unique Me addresses ways students have felt successful.
 - Sixth grade peer helpers working with first grade partners role play, on how to ask for help from significant adults.
 - Third grade teachers and the elementary school counselor conduct a guidance classroom meeting on accepting others' viewpoints.
 - Small groups led by school counselors share feelings about lack of success.
 - Guest speakers discuss career paths during Career Week.
 - Eighth grade English teachers team teach a peer writing unit on future goals.
- b. Identify student competencies which are not addressed. Identify program components, classes, and activities which could best address these competencies. Work with teachers, staff, and community to brainstorm creative strategies to achieve unmet needs. ☒
- c. Select the learning and counseling strategies which best address the student competencies. ☒
- classes or large groups;
 - individual or small group counseling;
 - consultation in individual or group meetings;
 - collaborative activities.
- Individual planning activities cut across all program components as students take increasing responsibility to plan and monitor their own learning and development. The student portfolio is the students' tool to monitor progress toward achieving competencies related to decision-making.
- d. Promote awareness of the student competencies and the learning and counseling strategies through the established channels of communication with all stakeholders. The Public Relations Task Force can publicize the completion of this step of the transition and familiarize stakeholders with the upcoming activities. ☒

NJ School Counseling Initiative

7. Periodically update the needs assessment at least every three years to identify changing concerns and expectations of the district and to assess the degree of fit between needs and competencies. ☒
8. Use the needs assessment results as an ongoing dynamic tool to encourage dialogue among the stakeholders, to increase support by the Board of Education and the administration, and to continue self-assessment by counselors as to their effectiveness and skills. ☒

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4.4: WRITING YOUR DISTRICT CURRICULUM

Develop a Curriculum Based Needs Assessment

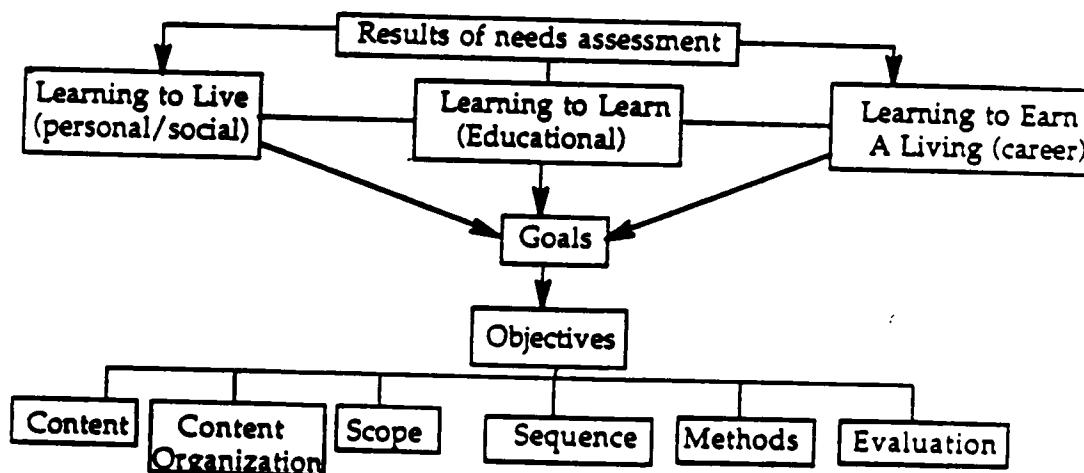
Writing your curriculum comes *after* you have analyzed the results of the needs assessment. This assessment will help you set priorities for the curriculum based on what parents, students, staff, and the community have identified as important. In the scope and sequence, three goals should be addressed in your prioritized needs:

- LEARNING TO LIVE
- LEARNING TO LEARN
- LEARNING TO EARN

Choose a Curriculum Model

Your counseling curriculum should correlate with your district's curriculum model, infusing your curriculum, where possible, within existing subject areas. However, the counseling curriculum is an equally important curriculum. Formal Board adoption and placement of the counseling curriculum within the district's curriculum guide assures legitimacy and parity of this curriculum with academic subjects.

The design below, used by the Wisconsin and Connecticut Models, offers flexibility in planning and developing a curriculum (Feyerson, Wisconsin DGCI, 1989):



NJ School Counseling Initiative

Prepare Your Curriculum Content

- ✓ Develop a scope and sequence chart. Identify goals to be introduced at one grade level and reintroduced at a later level, to show various stages of the total program.
- ✓ Develop a lesson plan format that is understood by all your staff. You may use the currently accepted district format.
- ✓ Select the level, methods, and year of introduction of the topic.
- ✓ Lesson plan design should:
 - include reference to the broad program goals
 - include one or more objectives that can be measured in terms of student outcomes
 - be developmental in nature at the level of student mastery and reflect grade level and domain (learning to live, learning to learn, and learning to earn), to assure balance in the curriculum
 - identify the methods, individual(s), or position responsible for delivery
 - identify where curriculum is currently taught in district

Clarify Roles and Steps Necessary to Implement Your Curriculum

- ✓ *Board of Education and district administration* endorse the New Jersey Model concept and assure continued financial support
- ✓ *Building administrators* endorse the New Jersey Model concept, provide resources, support, and assist teachers and counselors with access to students
- ✓ *Teachers* endorse the New Jersey Model concept, implement part of the curriculum assigned to be delivered in the classroom, and provide follow-up and evaluation
- ✓ *Counselors* endorse the New Jersey Model and coordinate the curriculum delivery system, and implement part of the curriculum assigned
- ✓ *Counselor supervisors* work with other department supervisors and building administrators to develop plans to implement curriculum, access students, and provide inservice training
- ✓ *Supervisors* provide support, resources, and staff evaluations

NJ School Counseling Initiative

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